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Author

Sharoff, Serge

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Meaning and/or Context

Serge Sharoff
Russian Institute for Artificial Intelligence
P.O.Box 111, Moscow, 103001, Russia
sharoff@artint.msk.su

The standard denotational approach for representation of lexical meanings supposes an independent *object,* for which this sign serves as a substitution. In formal case this object is usually represented in terms of semantic primitives. Leshka (1993) labels this approach as metaphysical and claims that its founder is Aristotle who treated meaning as something universal and independent from linguistic forms which express this meaning. From the linguistic viewpoint this approach is implemented as a vocabulary that provides mapping between a word and a list of meanings with conditions for selection of corresponding object from this list.

The primary drawback of this approach is that it supposes that all conditions on ways a word functions should be expressed explicitly, while they are implicit in conditions on its usage. This results in two problems: a long (potentially infinite) list of different meanings for a simple sign, and loose relations between all meanings from this list.

If the denotational approach to meaning representation could be associated with the metaphysical tradition, methodology of this paper follows the phenomenological movement. The proposed model which describes way in which meanings function in context is based on two Husserl ideas:

- intentionality as a correlation of noema and noesis, i.e. of an experienced phenomenon and its mode of being experienced (Husserl, 1960), in the case of language the meaning of a sign serves as noema, its context is noesis;
- the model of internal time consciousness (ITC) as continuous modification of manifold of retentions and constitution of protentions, i.e. conditions on expectations of upcoming events (Husserl, 1964).

According to Husserlian interpretation of intentionality, phenomena in consciousness cannot be studied independently on conditions on their actualization. In the same way signs to be uttered determine context while range of their possible realization is limited within this context, so only in a communication act signs are *engendered* with meaning.

If context is viewed as noesis, i.e. conditions in which a sign functions, two types of such conditions could be distinguished:

1. context of communicative needs, which is in turn subdivided into context of culture and situational context;
2. context which is determined by language resources and is subdivided into hierarchical one and linear one.

Instead of its definition a sign should be described by the structure of possibilities for its use in communication. The flexibility of meaning is caused by the fact that in different contexts these possibilities are exploited in different ways.

The relation between texts and the real world is mediated by communicative needs, since language is a social tool and not just a mirror of the external world. A definition of a sign captures an object this sign usually refers to instead of ways this sign could be used for an act of referring. The vocabulary fallacy is based on substitution of meaning constitution in a communicative act by a typical result of this act.

In the proposed model, language is treated as a system of signs which are used for classification based on a hierarchy of features: utterances bind communicative needs and classification systems in terms of generic-to-specific relations between categories. Contextual dependency of meaning in this model is described via change of the manifold of classification features: their set which is ascribed to a sign in a given communicative act should correspond to its contextual conditions, i.e. a set of classification features which describe other aspects (horizon) of the situation at question. When a new sign is introduced in the discourse, it functions as a concrete context-bound reference. However, when this sign is uttered, it is used from the viewpoint of functional classification of a specific aspect of an object or situation.

In the same way a classification system of functional features describe the grammatical system of language. This view directly follows position of structuralists (such as Saussure and Jakobson) that language is a system of interrelated synchronic oppositions.

Metaphoric usage also is not a marginal case in this model, because if signs provide a system of classifications, which are created from cases of usage, then metaphoric usage is natural since it serves much the same purpose, namely, realization of classification system in language.

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